

The Brooklyn Paper

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Fort Greene resident Taryn Crosby fastens one of many “20 is Plenty” signs crafted by the road safety group Right of Way.

SAFE AND SIGNED

Activists post new, fake 20-mile-per-hour speed limit signs

By Megan Riesz
The Brooklyn Paper

Call them the Department of Transformation. Activists with the road safety group Right of Way strung up a bunch of fake 20-mile-per-hour speed limit signs last weekend in Fort Greene, Park Slope, and Greenpoint, neighborhoods they say desperately need speed limit reductions to slow traffic fatalities. The guerrilla signage is



The battle for Brooklyn's byways

meant to build support for city road planners who want to squeeze drivers, not to attack them for failing to lower the speed limit on city streets, the road warriors said.

“We’re not trying to turn anyone against the Department of Transportation — we’re trying to help them out,” said Right of Way organizer Keegan Stephan. “I hope that this event helps build momentum.” Right of Way targeted neighborhoods that the city has passed over for so-called “Slow Zone” designations that would have brought a 20-mile-per-hour limit along with traffic-slowing features such as speed humps. Neighborhoods including Prospect

Heights, Clinton Hill and Bedford-Stuyvesant were picked for the designation last year, with the city citing high rates of crashes and injuries, but the activists say the recent deaths of 9-year-old Lucian Merryweather, who was fatally hit by the driver of a Ford Explorer in Fort Greene in November, as well as Samuel Cohen Eckstein, who was killed by a motorist in October on Prospect Park West, See **SIGNS** on page 11

Goodbye, Goodbye Blue Monday

By Danielle Furfaro
The Brooklyn Paper

A freewheeling and free-admission Bushwick music venue will close at the end of March unless it can come up with several thousand bucks, according to an insider. For nine years Goodbye Blue Monday refused to follow the tried-and-true business model for concert halls — booking bands that have fans and charging for admission — and now the business owes the city \$7,000 in fines that it would have to pay off before being able to renew its business license. Management says it is ready to throw in the bar towel. “To quote the man [Goodbye Blue Monday] was named after, ‘so it goes...’”



Goodbye Blue Monday manager Sunday Wright, former employees Adam DePalma, Margaux Stetx, and current staffers David Erazo and Forbes Holden contemplate the likely closure of the Bushwick staple.

the venue wrote on its Facebook page last Thursday, referencing the author Kurt Vonnegut. “Goodbye Blue Monday is closing down at the end of the month unless we can find a buyer who wants to take over ownership before then.” Numerous acts got their start in the club, including the indie sensation Vampire Weekend and the long-running Bushwick Book Club concert series, where bands perform songs inspired by a different work of literature each month. The venue has long maintained an open-booking policy and refused to charge a cover, opting instead to host shows by bands of all genres and skill levels and pay them by passing a hat See **BLUE** on page 12



A huge chandelier hangs over the lobby of the historic Bossert Hotel on Montague Street in Brooklyn Heights.

Beau Brooklyn

We go inside the Bossert Hotel, before it becomes hotel again

By Matthew Perlman
The Brooklyn Paper

An historic Brooklyn Heights hotel is on its way to becoming Brooklyn’s Waldorf Astoria all over again and, at a Purim party in the building

last weekend, our photographer could not help but get shots of the impressive restoration in progress. The storied Bossert Hotel, which sits on the corner of Montague and See **BOSSERT** on page 11

Whole paycheck!

City to cite megastore for neglect, again

By Megan Riesz
The Brooklyn Paper

The city is slapping the new Gowanus Whole Foods with a second fine for letting an historic building it owns fall apart, a Landmarks Preservation Commission spokesperson reported. The commission hit the mega-food retailer with a \$3,000

fine in December for failing to maintain the exterior of the Coignet building at Third Avenue and Third Street, which Whole Foods promised to fix up as part of a deal to allow it to build on the lot around it, but that ticket was dismissed on a technicality — the city forgot to bring a piece of paperwork to court, according to a spokeswoman. Now,

the fancy food-seller claims it started restoring the Coignet facade on March 10, but preservationists are not buying it and are getting ready to cite the upscale grocer again, according to a city spokeswoman. “It’s unfortunate,” said Landmarks Preservation Commission rep Damaris Olivo about See **WHOLE** on page 12



Whole Foods neighbor Martin Bisi says the grocer has not lifted a finger to fix the old Coignet building.



Ron Simon played the judge in a mock trial of housing court at Borough Hall. The verdict? Guilty of aiding and abetting bad landlords.

Housing court goes on trial

Tenants: The system is rigged

By Matthew Perlman
The Brooklyn Paper

Brooklyn’s housing court, where judges are supposed to settle landlord-tenant arguments with an even hand, is doing little more than helping building owners throw renters out on the street, according to activists and local pols.

A coalition of tenant organizations and elected officials descended on Borough Hall last Thursday evening to put housing court on trial with a mock hearing meant to send the message that the system needs reform now. “I think the housing court See **COURT** on page 12



Yolanda Dunbar, an eighth grader and two-time winner of her school’s pi memorization contest, pies teacher Kristen LaPlante.

Easy as π !

By Danielle Furfaro
The Brooklyn Paper

She sang for her pi — and threw it, too. A student whose jingle helped her memorize more than 125 digits of the infinitely long number that begins with “3.14” was allowed to smear a real pie in the face See **PI** on page 14

MASTER CLASS

Chess great to teach in home boro

By Danielle Furfaro
The Brooklyn Paper

Brooklyn chess whizzes and novices are about to get some lessons in strategy from one of the world’s most well-known players. Bruce Pandolfini, a United States Chess Federation national master and a contemporary of Bobby Fischer, began coaching in the borough last week. He is not doing it for the money or the glory, he said. “I do it because I love it,” said Pan-

dolfini, who grew up in Bensonhurst and Flatbush and now lives in Manhattan. “Once you show a kid that she or he can do well at something like this, they can use it as a springboard to be good at other things.” Pandolfini first got bitten by the chess bug when he was a kid. “I was walking through the Brooklyn Public Library when I was 13 and I came across the chess section. I became obsessed with the figures See **CHESS** on page 14



Bruce Pandolfini, a United States Chess Federation national master, is returning to his hometown borough to mentor young players.

Green day in Slope

By Megan Riesz
The Brooklyn Paper

They went green. Emerald-clad kids and their parents swarmed the neighborhood on Sunday for the 39th annual Brooklyn Saint Patrick’s Day Parade in Park Slope. It was a grand, green time, one first-time spectator and local business owner gushed. “We had a blast,” said Thistle Hill Tavern and Pork Slope co-owner David Massoni, whose son Luca marched with his Windsor Terrace school PS 154. “My son was very proud. He was adamant about not quitting and finishing the march.” The parade, which began at 15th Street and Prospect Park West and continued to Seventh Avenue and Garfield Place, boasted hundreds of Irish-step-dancers, bagpipe players, and flag-waving spectators who came out to celebrate Ireland’s patron saint. The event also included a ceremony commemorating the heroes and victims of the Sept. 11 attacks.



(Top) Sloper Meaghan Salmon sports a neon green boa. (Above) Little Elvis gets into the spirit with green fur and a sweater.



Timms started his pub contests with chili bake-offs at his apartment, needing little more than pot like this one.

Takedowns taking off

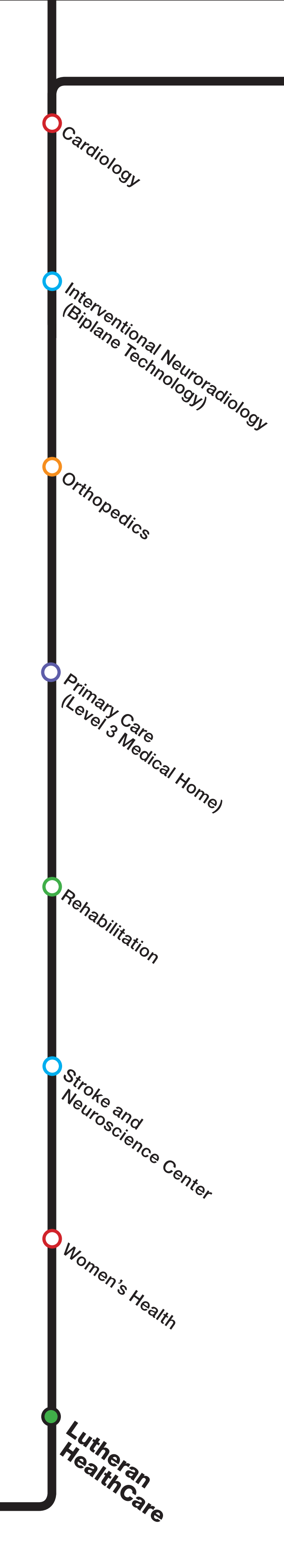
From wacky cook-offs to a nightlife empire

By Matthew Perlman
The Brooklyn Paper

What do mac and cheese, velvet Elvis paintings, and pots of chili have in common? They are all the building blocks of a career. The Takedowns are a series of pub contests in which entrants take a ubiquitous food,

like mac and cheese or meatballs, or a kitschy art form, like cat drawings or velvet Elvis paintings, and compete to come up with the tastiest or best-looking creation in a short time period. And the Bushwick resident behind the wacky events treats organizing them like it is his job — because it is.

“This is all I do now,” said Takedown organizer Matt Timms (pictured above). “I’m supposed to be an actor.” The events started a decade ago as informal cook-offs in Timms’ Williamsburg pad. But soon he was hosting his unique brand of food face-offs in watering holes around the boro See **CHILI** on page 13



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BROOKLYN NETS COVERAGE

Better odds for the Nets



FRONT COURT

By Tom Lafe

The Nets continue to defy the odds.

Odds were that, following last summer's painful first-round exit to the severely depleted Chicago Bulls, the team's blockbuster trade that brought in cagey veterans Paul Pierce and Kevin Garnett would allow the Nets to rival the Heat and the Pacers for the chance to represent the Eastern Conference in the NBA Finals.

It has been well documented that odds-makers — and the rest of us — missed the mark on that prediction. Through the 2013 portion of



the season, the Nets stood at 10–21, good for one of the five worst records in the NBA at that point.

Bookies took notice, and the line on the Nets winning the title fell to 100–1.

In fact, anyone who looked at that team on Jan. 1 —myself included— said, “So much for that experiment. These guys are too old.”

Now it seems that all of us were wrong about this bunch of methodical, defensive-minded veterans.

The Nets have managed to turn it around to the point where they now have 50–1 odds to win the NBA title, the third-best odds of any team in the Eastern Conference.

The Nets stand at 34–31 after Monday's victory over the Suns, with only four of the 17 remaining games coming

against teams with winning records. The team's 24–10 record since Jan. 1 is the conference's best, and includes a recent win at Miami without Kevin Garnett and Andrei Kirilenko, two of its best frontcourt defenders.

It has been hard for Brooklyn to shake the stink of that opening 10–21 record from the collective perception, but maybe, over the next 17 games, the Nets will be able to get right back to where the team was predicted to start.

And maybe the odds-makers will have been right all along.

Tom Lafe is a 6-foot-5 sports-world insider with a middling high school basketball career who believes the Nets will be driven by the success of the team's big men.

The Truth is, he was worth it



BACK COURT

By Matt Spolar

There is a thing called “old man game,” and Paul Pierce is its master.

The 36-year-old can't jump like he used to, nor can he attack the basket with youthful abandon. But like many NBA greats, The Truth has added nuances and shortcuts over time, finding new ways to beat his opponent as his body declines.

When Pierce arrived from Boston in the offseason alongside his veteran partner in crime Kevin Garnett, how he would fit the Nets' system was a bit murky. The team already had Joe Johnson, a 6-feet-7 former All-Star known for creating his own shot.

Pierce struggled early in the season, along with most of his fellow Nets, and whether his time in Brooklyn would be a bust — he's only under contract through the end of this season — became a very real question.

In the last two months, however, Pierce has shown why he was so successful for all those years up North,



ing 47 percent from three-point range — proof that his eyesight is holding up.

But the most important thing Pierce gives this Nets team doesn't show up in box scores — except when it does. His competitive drive and his ability to rise to the occasion gives Brooklyn an edge in big games that simply wasn't there during the 2012–13 season. In three games (all wins) so far against the defending champion Miami Heat, Pierce has dropped 19, 23 and, most recently, a classic 29-point performance last week.

Before the season began, many thought Garnett would be the main source of intangibles like passion and leadership that the Nets sorely lacked last year, only to watch his impact muted by injuries and a drastic regression in his play. Thankfully, Pierce has been able to pick up the slack, and turn back the clock when it matters most. As the playoffs loom, Nets fans can breathe a little easier with No. 34 doing what he does best.

Matt Spolar is a nearly 6-foot-1 journalist with a middling high school basketball career who is sure the Nets win thanks to team's top-tier guards.

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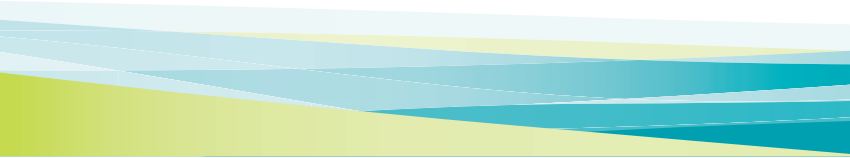
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Jogger ambushed in Boerum

84TH PRECINCT

Brooklyn Heights–DUMBO–Boerum Hill–Downtown

A ruffian punched a man mid-run and stole his phone on Bergen Street on March 5, cops said.

The 25-year-old victim said he was running between Smith and Hoyt streets at 5:25 pm when a punk popped out of nowhere, punched him in the face, and stole his phone.

Slap and dash

A lout pushed and slapped a lady on Garden Place before grabbing her phone on March 5, police stated.

The 42-year-old victim told cops she was walking between Joralemon and State streets at 5:30 pm when the brute approached and asked her for directions to Jay Street. The woman told the villain how to get there and kept walking, then the jerk ran up from behind and smacked her, pushed her, and snatched her phone before taking off on Joralemon Street heading towards the East River, cops said.

Two on one

Two galoos mugged a lady on Fourth Avenue on March 8, cops said.

The 51-year-old victim was walking to the subway near Pacific Street at 1 am when one of the lowlifes grabbed her arms, and the other punched her in the face, giving her a black eye, police stated. The no-goodniks grabbed her phone and \$60 in cash from her coat pocket, then scrambled, according to a report.

Pick of the lifter

Three wallets were swiped in three separate incidents within a few days of each other, cops said.

A thief snagged the billfold from a woman’s purse on Feb. 28 on Fulton Street, police said.

The 43-year-old victim told cops her handbag was closed when she got off the B52 bus on between Hoyt Street and Gallatin Place. But she noticed while shopping in a department store near the bus stop sometime between 3 and 4 pm that her purse had been opened and her wallet removed, according to a police report.

The wallet contained \$120 in cash, debit, and credit cards and someone used the cards to buy \$62 in MetroCards immediately after the theft, cops said.

A bandit then stole a wallet from a fellow on his way to school on Jay Street on March 5, according to authorities.

The 22-year-old student realized his Harley Davidson wallet was missing when he got to his school between Tillary Street and Tech Place at 11:30 am, police said. The motorcycle-branded billfold contained \$57 in cash, debit, and credit cards, a report says.

The next day, a thief pinched a guy’s wallet at a restaurant on Adams Street, cops said.

The victim said he was at the Borough Hall subway station reaching for his MetroCard when he realized the wallet had vanished and, with it, \$30 in cash, debit, and credit cards. Crooks used the cards to buy stuff at a nearby pharmacy and pay for a cab ride, according to a police report.

Losing weight

An opportunistic crook filched a gym bag full of clothes and a laptop from the backseat of a vehicle parked on Nevins Street on March 5, authorities reported.

The victim left the 2012 Jeep between Atlantic Avenue and Pacific Street at 8:15 pm and came back at 11:30 pm to find the gym bag missing, police said. The victim told cops the bag contained a laptop, clothes, a weightlifting belt, and a protein supplement. There was no sign of forced entry, a report says.

Messed up

A prowler ransacked a Henry Street apartment while the owner was out on March 7, police said.

The victim reported he left his apartment between Mid-dagh and Poplar streets at 10:30 am and arrived home from work at 6 pm to discover the place trashed. The raiders got away with an electronic reader, a tablet, two pairs of heirloom earrings, and a necklace with a pendant, according to a report.

Laundry snag

Police cuffed a man who they say went into a department store on Fulton Street on March 3, shoved \$1,013 worth of clothes into a laundry bag, and tried to flee.

Workers at the store between Hoyt Street and Gallatin Place say they saw the 35-year-old stowing the merchandise in his bag at 10:20 am and called cops. Officers came and arrested the fashion-minded suspect.

POLICE BLOTTER

Find more online every Wednesday at BrooklynPaper.com/blotter

Inside job

Cops arrested one man in connection with an armed robbery that took place in a Farragut Houses apartment building on March 7.

The 31-year-old victim said she was sitting in the living room of her apartment on York Street between Gold and Bridge streets at 5:30 am with her daughter and her daughter’s father. The father’s brother knocked on the door and, after letting him in, the father took out a handgun and held it to his daughter’s head, according to a police report. The lowlife told the woman, “If you don’t give me what I want, she’s not gonna make it,” cops said.

The scoundrel grabbed the woman’s phone and \$1,000 in cash from inside the pad and he and his brother va-moosed, the report said.

The report did not clarify which man was arrested.

88TH PRECINCT

Fort Greene–Clinton Hill

Car break-ins

Cops warned people not to keep their valuables in their vehicles last week after a weeks-long rash of car break-ins in the 88th Precinct did not stop despite the arrest of a suspect with a long rap sheet. And it looks like they were justified.

A burglar broke into a parked car on Adelphi Street on March 13, busting in the window and stealing a purse from the passenger seat, cops said.

The 49-year-old victim told police she parked the car between DeKalb and Willoughby avenues at 5:30 pm and, when she returned a short while later, the deed had been done. The bag contained her phone, some cash, and a pair of prescription glasses, cops said.

A crook also took a backpack from inside a work truck on Myrtle Avenue on March 10, authorities reported.

The 31-year-old victim said he parked the truck at the corner of Ryerson Place at 6 pm and noticed his bag gone when he got back. There was no broken window in this incident and the bag contained \$20 in cash as well as credit cards, police said.

Chase case

A burglar was thwarted when a passerby saw him stealing packages from inside his building on Clinton Avenue and ran him down, police said.

The good Samaritan told police he saw the lowlife picking up boxes inside his building between Fulton Street and Gates Avenue at 4:43 pm and told him to halt. The thief booked it and the civilian gave chase for a block, then grabbed him and did not let go until cops arrived, according to a report.

Cops charged the 45-year-old suspect with the Clinton Avenue burglary and a similar package-snagging that took place on March 3 in a building on S. Oxford Street between Atlantic Avenue and Hanson Place. That theft, of a box of clothes, was caught on video, cops said.

Mugs of fear

Two bands of marauders robbed two people in separate incidents on March 15.

In the first robbery, three punks held up a guy at knife-point on Saint James Place, cops said.

The victim was walking towards Greene Avenue at 3:10 pm when the trio approached him from behind, demanded money, and flashed a knife, according to authorities. Two of the goons held his arms and the third punched him in face and grabbed \$80 in cash from his pocket, police stated.

The same day, at 5:23 pm, four toughs beat a 35-year-old man with a metal pipe and tried to rob him of his bicycle on Rockwell Place near Lafayette Avenue, according to a report. The fearsome foursome took off without the bike, police said.

Paintball sniper

A ruffian shot a 50-year-old man with a paintball gun from inside an apartment in the Ingersoll Houses on March 12, police said.

The victim reported he was standing in the parking lot on Carlton Avenue near the corner of Park Avenue at 12:30 pm when a frozen paintball hit him in the torso. The unlucky sap thought the projectile came from an apartment on the second floor of a nearby building.

Double barreled

Goons pistol-whipped two people in front of a bar on Myrtle Avenue in two separate incidents on March 16, cops said.

The first assault happened

outside the tavern between Grand Avenue and Steuben Street at 3 am, when a cretin whacked a 28-year-old man in the head with a black handgun, according to police. That victim was uncooperative, according to a report.

An hour later, brutes slammed a 21-year-old lady in the face and head with a black handgun at the same bar, police reported.

The victim said she got into an argument with a woman in front of the bar and that a lout come out of nowhere and started whaling on her with the gun. The scoundrel jumped into a white and gray Suburban that was parked at the curb, and peeled off on Myrtle heading towards Grand, authorities stated.

Wheel and steal

Thieves tried to steal bikes from apartment buildings in two separate events, police reported.

A prowler tried to steal two bikes from a Fort Greene Place hallway on March 14, but only got away with one, cops said.

The 32-year-old victim told cops he heard loud noises coming from outside his apartment between DeKalb and Lafayette avenues at 4:40 am. When he opened the door to investigate, he saw his two bikes were missing and immediately got dressed and ran outside, according to a police report. He saw the thief trying to ride away on one of the bikes while ghost-riding the other and was able to grab the bike the guy was holding, the report says.

A crook jacked another bike from the hallway of a Fulton Street building in the early morning hours of March 10, authorities said.

The 46-year-old victim, who lives between Grand Avenue and Downing Street, said she saw the bike at 2 am and, when she got up at 9 am, the ride was gone.

Party foul

A bandit swiped a phone out of a woman’s hand while she was at a crowded party on Waverly Avenue on March 16.

The victim said she was holding the phone in her hand at the bash between Fulton Street and Atlantic Avenue at 3:30 am, when someone snagged it and ran into the crowd.

— **Matthew Perlman**

68TH PRECINCT

Bay Ridge–Dyker Heights

Jacked jacket

A lowlife lifted a man’s coat from a Fifth Avenue watering hole on March 11, police reported.

The victim said he left his jacket — with his wallet in one of the pockets — on a hanger near the entrance of the establishment at the corner of 79th Street at 2:45 pm. When he went back for it shortly afterward, the coat was gone, along with his billfold containing \$60 in cash, cops said.

Battery jump

A bandit jacked the tires and rims from a car parked on Battery Avenue overnight on March 11, according to cops.

The victim reported parking his sedan between Fort Hill and Poly places at 11:30 pm and returning at 8 am the next day to discover his wheels stripped.

Child’s play

A crook swiped a woman’s purse from atop her baby stroller inside a grocery store on 63rd Street on March 14, authorities said.

Security tapes show the villain snatching the bag — containing \$400 in cash, a checkbook, and several credit cards — inside the store near Eighth Avenue at 11:35 pm, while the woman was distracted shopping, police said.

— **Will Bredderman**

94TH PRECINCT

Greenpoint–Northside

Steal this art

Cops arrested a guy who they say tried to cut down an Oak Street gym’s sculpture on March 15.

The suspect was underneath a welded art piece between West and Franklin streets at around 10 pm with a hydraulic rebar bolt-cutter, a piece of metal art inside of his car, and graffiti gear on him, according to police.

Police charged the 44-year-old man with grand larceny.

Nightcap

A lowlife jumped a man as he came out of the Grand Avenue L station in the early morning of March 11, cops said.

The 24-year-old victim

told police that he had been drinking at a bar in Manhattan and then got on the L train to come home. When he exited the station at the corner of Metropolitan Avenue at 2:30 am, the fiend grabbed him from behind and snatched his phone, wallet, cash, and credit cards out of his right hand, police reported.

Stay vigilant

A crook stole a woman’s purse when she left it in her unlocked car for 10 minutes on West Street on March 16, police stated.

The 53-year-old victim reported she left her purse in her unlocked car when she went into a home at 2:45 pm and, when she came back 10 minutes later, she found the handbag — which contained her credit card, debit cards, iPhone, and ID — missing.

Safe unsound

A prowler pinched \$2,000 in cash from a Norman Avenue restaurant safe on March 9, according to authorities.

The owner of the eatery between Eckford Street and McGuinness Boulevard said he keeps his money in a safe in the storage room and he left it unsecured between 7 am and 3 pm that day. When he returned to check on it, the cash it was all gone, a report says. The owner told police that the safe was in an area accessible to all employees.

90TH PRECINCT

Southside–Bushwick

Shoot-em-up

A gunman blasted four teens on S. Second Street on March 14, cops said.

A group of between 10 and 15 teens were roaming the streets at 7:27 pm when they came across some youngsters at the corner of Havemeyer Street, the two groups got into an argument, and someone opened fire, police said. Four of the youths, including a 12-year-old, two 14-year-olds, and a 17-year-old were all shot in the leg, according to a report.

Into thin air

A quick-handed bandit snatched a man’s iPad Air out of his hands while he was sitting on the G train on March 15, according to authorities.

The 53-year-old victim said he was riding the G train at 1:45 pm when it stopped at the Flushing station at the corner of Marcy Avenue and Wallabout Street and the thief grabbed his iPad and ran out just before the doors closed.

Rube robbed

Cops cuffed a lady who they say stole luggage from a naive teenager who left it sitting on the sidewalk on Ross Street on March 12.

The 17-year-old victim told police he left his luggage, clothes, and tefillin on the sidewalk while he went into a building between Williamsburg Street and Lee Avenue from 4:20 until 5:20 pm on March 12.

A witness told police who stole it and they arrested a 50-year-old woman and charged her with grand larceny.

Fancy footwork

A trio of thieves used some inventive trickery to steal fancy handbags from a Grand Street store on March 12, police reported.

A clerk said three customers came into the store between Bedford and Driggs avenues at 1:05 pm and all of them immediately started asking to try on different sneaker sizes and styles, forcing her to go downstairs several times.

While she was downstairs, the cunning threesome stole two Alexander Wang Rocco duffel bags and a pair of MM6 leopard sneakers, according to a report.

Senior swindle

An elderly con artist talked another elderly woman into handing her thousands of dollars worth of cash with the promise of even more cash on Graham Avenue on March 11, authorities said.

The victim reported she was inside the apartment between Broadway and Debevoise Street at 12:38 pm when a woman told her that she would give her a purse filled with \$25,000 in exchange for a cash withdrawal of \$2,100.

The victim agreed and went to a Chase bank with the schemer to withdraw the money, cops said. The chiseler took the money and told the woman to walk to Woodhull Hospital where she was supposed to meet another lady who would give her the purse full of cash, but the second woman never showed, police stated.

More bad teens

A crew of young hoodlums attacked a 16-year-old as he was walking home on McKibben Street on March 11, police said. The attack happened on Bushwick Avenue at McKibben Street, cops said.

— **Danielle Furfaro**

Match ani-made in D'town

Amid costumes and comics, anime-fan couple gets engaged

By Matthew Perlman
The Brooklyn Paper

At least one anime enthusiast got more than she bargained for at a Downtown convention last weekend when her partner in Japanimation proposed to her.

Ronald Gonzalez and Jecibel Rodriguez were volunteering at New York University–Polytechnic’s annual anime festival SpringFestNY where they met three years ago and, from the moment they walked into the cafeteria on Saturday, Rodriguez knew something was up.

“I thought something was wrong with him,” she said. Gonzalez popped the question in a crowded cafeteria, surrounded by costumed superheroes and villains, sitting at the very table where he and Rodriguez first laid eyes on each other.

“I wanted it to be at the exact location,” Gonzalez said. “I thought it would be special.”

It all clicked for Rodriguez when her beau dropped down to one knee.

“I was like, ‘Oh! That’s what’s happening,’” she said.

A friend surreptitiously



(Left) Anime enthusiasts dressed up on March 16 for SpringFestNY, Downtown’s anime extravaganza. (Right) The happy couple, Ronald Gonzalez and Jecibel Rodriguez, minutes after Gonzalez popped the question in the same spot where the lovers met three years go.



caught the whole thing on video.

“It was absolutely beautiful,” said Adam Edwards, who helped organize the anime festival and also distracted Rodriguez while her soon-to-be fiance got ready to pop the big question. “It was a magical experience.”

Rodriguez thought that matrimony was somewhere on the horizon, but did not know how quickly it was ap-

proaching.

“I knew it was going to happen soon, but I didn’t know when,” she said.

Gonzalez, on the other hand, did not count his eggs before they hatched.

“I didn’t expect her to say yes,” he said.

When Rodriguez accepted the ring, the room erupted into cheers and chants of “Yes!”

The rest of SpringFestNY, which was held at MetroTech

Center on March 16 and 17, went equally well, said Gregory Fisher, who helped organize the event.

“Most people are saying it’s the best we’ve ever done,” he said.

The festival was the school’s 10th and included live music, vendors, and panel discussions all centered around Japanese animation and culture.

There was also a so-called

“Cosplay Masquerade” where contestants were judged on the creativity of their costumes and how convincingly they played the part of characters from the world of comics, niche and mainstream, as well as a soda-drinking contest.

PRAY AND PLAY

New Barclays meditation room injects spirituality into bowels of sports arena

By Megan Riesz
The Brooklyn Paper

The Barclays Center is now offering something rare in a sports arena — peace and quiet.

A lavender-colored meditation room opened up on the main level of the Prospect Heights entertainment complex last week as part of an agreement between developer Forest City Ratner and neighborhood groups that cleared the way for the Atlantic Yards mega-development.

The room shows that the Barclays Center’s owners have their priorities in order, according to the reverend who negotiated for it.

“There ought to be a place where people remember that we are more than physical,



Hanging out in the lavender meditation room is like staring at a brick wall, only soothing.

that the mind is spiritual, and you need a place to rest and reflect,” said Rev. Herbert Daughtry, pastor of the

nearby House of the Lord Pentecostal Church on Atlantic Avenue.

The Zen den — which

boasts a shrine, rows of chairs, and walls imprinted with words such as “Love” and “Forgiveness” — is the first of its kind, the pastor added.

Daughtry initially lobbied for a chapel in the arena paid for in part by taxpayer dollars, but was told that he could not use public funds for religious purposes. Despite the dilution, the meditation room is still a win for event-goers who need a break from the chaos of urban life, he said and, we would add, for Nets fans seeking the favor of a power higher than Kevin Garnett’s massage tab.

“Hopefully it will send a message across the country that while we build, build, and build, and while we advance, we should remember that these things don’t necessarily make for quality of life,” the reverend said.

The room is open during all Barclays Center events and use of the quiet quarters can be arranged outside of normal hours.

LENTEN MEDITATIONS

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Granny games!

Hipster shuffleboard club to launch mahjong league

By Megan Riesz
The Brooklyn Paper

This isn't your grandmother's game night — or is it?

Starting March 31, the Royal Palms Shuffleboard Club in Gowanus is adding the Chinese tile game mahjong to its roster of typically old-timey activities — but first, the owners have to figure out how to play.

"It'll be like, 'Okay, can somebody read the directions off the box?'" said club co-owner Ashley Albert. "It's this mysterious game that we all watched our grandmothers play in Florida."

Albert recently posted an announcement on the shuffleboard club's Facebook page about the possibility of starting a Monday night mahjong league and fielded about 90 enthusiastic responses. Her Floridian grandmother used to play the game — in which three or four players try to get the highest combination of tiles — four times a week, but Albert never learned herself.

"I remember just playing with the tiles and just not knowing what I was doing," she said.

The club, which will charge \$10 per

GAMES

Mahjong at the Royal Palms Shuffleboard Club [514 Union St. between Nevins Street and Third Avenue in Gowanus, (347) 223-4410, www.royal-palmsshuffle.com]. Monday nights starting March 31.

player, has put an advertisement on Craigslist for a mahjong teacher — without much luck so far. But Albert is confident that she can coach the masses if need be, even if she has to rely on YouTube tutorial videos to school herself first.

The Royal Palms Shuffleboard Club, which has been open since late January, seems to specialize in games that are popular with the elderly — in addition to the eponymous cruise-ship amusement, it recent added a weekly bingo night on Wednesdays.

With these kinds of events, the massive playhouse is becoming the go-to watering hole in Gowanus that the owners hoped it would be, Albert gushed.

"It's so fun to see people who grew up in the neighborhood, so it's not just new residents," she said. "We're adding something to the neighborhood."



Photo by Stefano Giovannini

Tile style: Ashley Albert, co-owner of the Royal Palms Shuffleboard Club, is starting a mahjong league — as soon as she learns how to play.

Gray is the new black

Everything old is new again in Brooklyn. Hobbies once generally associated with the elderly — such as crocheting, card games, and bingo — have been co-opted by the young, and are now common sights at bars around the borough. With the Royal Palms Shuffleboard Club adding a mahjong league, we couldn't help but wonder what other pastimes Brooklyn's spring chickens can appropriate from its old timers. Here are a few we would like to see — and the venues we would like to see them in.

Slide night

Nothing tickles a grandparent's fancy more than showing slides of their straight-faced younger selves standing on newfangled suburban lawns. And nothing tickles a hipster's fancy more than using outdated technology and then showing the fruits of said technology to a group of like-minded neophiles. Williamsburg bar-theater Videology could allow 20-something travelers the chance to show off selfies and food photos from their recent trip to Portland, Ore., while their audiences sip craft cocktails to numb the boredom.

Couponing

Forget book clubs — as our elders already know, the real way to enrich your life, both literally and figuratively, is getting together with pals to clip coupons and trade thrifty tips. Lulu's in Greenpoint, known for its free pizza and cheap drinks, would be the perfect place for unpaid interns to gather and share two-for-one coffee vouchers. You never know when that combined pizza and cheesy-bread offer could come in handy.

Early supper club

Brooklyn has played host to si-

lent dinners, bug dinners, and even Beyonce-themed dinners — but what about early dinners? Retirees know what is up — chowing down around 4 pm leaves more hours for having fun. New Clinton Hill restaurant the Runner serves turn-of-the-century cuisine, with denture-friendly dishes such

as chicken liver mousse and butternut squash soup. An early-evening seating would allow bar-happy Brooklynites time for the pregaming process and more rounds of Card Against Humanity.

Water aerobics

Between dodgeball leagues, corn-

hole tournaments, and bocce courts inside bars, sports that require minimal physical exertion are booming. Water aerobics combines the retro appeal of Richard Simmons' favorite workout with low resistance and pool noodles. Plus, it is an excellent way for singles to check each other out in swimwear.



Associated Press / Carolyn Kaster

Float on: Could water aerobics be the next Brooklyn hipster social activity? We think so!

MUSIC

Unreal live

The times, they are a-repeating. The 1980s are often derided as Bob Dylan's lost years — as least from a musical perspective. But to his die-hard fans, the worst of Dylan is still better than most other musicians' best.



Associated Press / Press Association

To illustrate this, ATO Records has recorded a tribute album featuring covers of songs he wrote between 1980 and 1990, and many of the artists featured on the disc will celebrate its release with a party at the Music Hall of Williamsburg on March 24.

"Bob Dylan in the '80s: Vol. 1" contains tributes by bands including Built to Spill, Gene Ween and Slash, and Blitz En Trapper, and artists appearing at the show will include Langhorne Slim, Spirit Family Reunion, Elvis Perkins, and members of Deer Tick.

The idea for the album came from a cover band that album co-producers Jesse Lauter and Sean O'Brien started while they were both attending New York University. They called the band S----- Dylan.

"It was not meant to be ironic or a jokey thing," said Lauter. "It is to bring light to this catalog of songs that have mostly gone ignored while this is the most covered musician in the history of pop music."

Lauter talked up the idea to the artists he worked with. When Craig Finn from the Hold Steady agreed to record a song, others started jumping on board.

At the Music Hall of Williamsburg show, each artist will play the song they recorded, as well as one other Dylan song from any era.

Dylan probably knows about the album, said Lauter, but is himself happy to let the '80s remain lost.

"I can safely say that he is probably aware but blissfully doesn't care," said Lauter.

"Dylan in the '80s Record Release Show" at Music Hall of Williamsburg [66 North Sixth St. between Kent and Wythe avenues in Williamsburg. (718) 486-5400, www.musicallofwilliamsburg.com]. March 24 at 8 pm. \$18-20. — Danielle Furfaro

HUMOR

Clown school

This is one live show where audience members won't be asked to turn their cell phones off.

A new one-man show at the New York City College of Technology's Voorhees Theatre lets audience members be the "wing man" for a silent clown, using social media to help him find romantic bliss.

"We've torn down the fourth wall," said Mark Gindick, the seasoned clown who wrote and stars in the show. "And we've added a fifth wall."

Gindick is not speaking metaphorically — the show features a giant projection screen that allows live social networking feeds and other internet content to be beamed in front of the audience. And the crowd is encouraged to pick up their phones and participate using specific hash tags for posts on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

"Wing-Man" — set to open at the Downtown theater for a four-day run starting March 26 — is a modern take on Charlie Chaplin's classic film "Modern Times," which depicts a man unable to adapt to the technological changes affecting the world around him. Chaplin's character had to catch up with the industrial revolution, while Gindick's clown is contending with social media and the internet age.

"It explores the reasons why we use social media," Gindick said. "It's fun, ridiculous, physical comedy. But it also has some heart and soul."

The show's lead jester will not be dressed like a typical clown. Gindick's character wears no makeup and a suit only a few sizes too big. He hopes to entertain with physical humor and slapstick, while also prompting the audience to send messages from their mobile devices.

The new show is part of the City Tech's Theatreworks program, which pairs professional performers and production teams with students from the school's entertainment technology department. Around 65 students worked on "Wing-Man," helping with set building, equipment installation, and sound engineering alongside professionals and school faculty members.

"Wing-Man" at New York City College of Technology (186 Jay St. at High Street in Downtown, www.theatreworkscitytech.org). March 26-29 at 8 pm. Free for City Tech students, \$10 other students, \$20 general admission. — Matthew Perlman



Photo by John Schia



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WHERE TO GO

EDITORS' PICKS

FRIDAY

March 21

Take a bow

Burn down the disco and hang the blessed DJ, but leave the Knitting Factory intact — because that is where tribute act the Sons and Heirs will be playing all your favorite Smiths songs. The band attempts to recreate the full experience of seeing Morrissey and co. live. And given Moz is adamant the real Smiths will never reunite, this may be the closest you ever get.

8 pm at the Knitting Factory [361 Metropolitan Ave. near Havermeyer Street in Williamsburg, (347) 529-6696, bk.knittingfactory.com]. \$10–\$12.

SATURDAY

March 22

Rock 'n' roll high school

And they shall teach rock 'n' roll to the world! The School of Rock, where kids learn to shred and wail like Dewey Finn, is opening up its first Brooklyn location. To celebrate, the new Gowanus school is holding an open house, with workshops, giveaways, jam sessions, and performances from pint-sized punks.

1–4 pm at School of Rock [327 Douglass St. between Third and Fourth avenues in Gowanus, (347) 915-4419, brooklyn.schoolof-rock.com]. Free.

8 pm at the Knitting Factory [361 Metropolitan Ave. near Havermeyer Street in Williamsburg, (347) 529-6696, bk.knittingfactory.com]. \$10–\$12.

SUNDAY

March 23

Paddy's returns

Didn't get enough Saint Patrick's Day? Do it all over again this weekend when the Bay Ridge parade hits the streets! Watch the piping, step dancing, and marching in all its green and orange glory, then hit one of the many Irish bars along Third Avenue for a celebratory pint (or five).

1 pm (Third Avenue at Marine Avenue in Bay Ridge, www.bayridgest-patricksday.com). Free.

TUESDAY

March 25

Get Red-y

A British actor is coming to America to tell the story of an American actor who went to Britain. "Red Velvet," an acclaimed production from London's Tricycle Theatre, is based on the incredible true story of Ira Aldridge, a black American actor who achieved unlikely success as a Shakespearean thespian in Europe in the 1800s.

8 pm at St. Ann's Warehouse [38 Water St. between Dock and Main streets in Dumbo, (718) 834-8794]. \$45–\$55.

8 pm at the Bell House [149 Seventh St. between Second and Third avenues in Gowanus, (718) 643-6510, www.thebellhouse-ny.com]. \$20

WEDNESDAY

March 26

Write on

Do you miss receiving snail mail? Popular Australian literary series "Women of letters" is attempting to revive the lost art of letter-writing by asking well-known women to pen missives on specific topics, then read them aloud. This installment will feature Martha Wainwright, Edie Falco, Ophira Eisenberg, and Le Tigre's JD Samson, among others.

NINE DAYS IN BROOKLYN

FRI, MARCH 21

ART, "A CIELO APERTO": Exhibition by Maria Rapisavoli. Free. 10 am–6 pm. International Studio and Curatorial Program (1040 Metropolitan Ave. near Morgan Avenue in East Williamsburg), www.iscp-nyc.org.

ART, "MICHAEL ROUILLARD: Paintings": Featuring a group of new white, geometric paintings on thin aluminum panels. Free. Noon–6 pm. Minus Space [111 Front St. between Washington and Adams streets, Suite 226 in DUMBO, (347) 525-4628], www.minusspace.com.

ART, KATERINA MARCELIA: "Fragment Series": Print exhibition. Free. 2–6 pm. Open Source Gallery (306 17th St. near Sixth Avenue in South Slope), opensourcegallery.org.

ART, OPENING: "The Way You Look Is the Way I Feel": New sculptural paintings by Reed Anderson. Free. 7–9 pm. Pierogi Gallery [177 North 9th St. between Bedford and Driggs avenues in Williamsburg, (718) 599-2144], www.pierogi2000.com.

TALK, NELSON MANDELA TRIBUTE: "The Fight for Freedom" documentary showing, poetry, and discussion with Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams. Free. 5 pm. YWCA of Brooklyn [30 3rd Ave. between State Street and Atlantic Avenue in Boerum Hill, (718) 875-1190], www.ywcabklyn.org.

THEATER, "KING LEAR": Theatre for a New Audience performs Shakespeare's play. \$60–\$75. 7:30 pm. Polonsky Shakespeare Center [262 Ashland Pl. between Fulton and Lafayette avenues in Fort Greene, (866) 811-4111], www.tfana.org.

THEATER, "DEAD END": Five teenagers struggle with extreme wealth and poverty in a divided New York City. \$15–25. 7:30 pm. Iroindale Center [85 S. Oxford St. at Lafayette Avenue in Fort Greene, (718) 488-9233], www.iroindale.org.

FILM, FILM SHOWCASE: "PDXX": Films by women from Portland, OR. \$5. 7:30 pm. Spectacle Theater [124 South 3rd St. between Bedford Avenue and Berry Street in Williamsburg], www.spectacletheater.com.

THEATER, "TWELFTH NIGHT, OR WHAT YOU WILL": A world of foolery, fantasy, and rowdy house guests, where identity is mistaken and imagination often proves true. \$15–\$18. 7:30 pm. South Oxford Space [138 South Oxford St. near Hanson Place in Fort Greene], www. oldhattheatrecompany.com.

THEATER, "MAID'S DOOR": Family drama written by Cheryl L. Davis. \$15–\$25 (children and seniors \$12–\$15). 8 pm. Billie Holiday Theatre [1368 Fulton St. between Marcy and Brooklyn avenues in Bedford-Stuyvesant, (718) 636-0918], www.thebillieholiday.org.

THEATER, "REPUBLIC": Hoi Polloi Theater Company performs a dream-like piece inspired by Plato's Republic. \$18. 8 pm. Jack (505 1/2 Waverly Ave. at Fulton Street in Fort Greene), www.jackny.org.

THEATER, "MEDEA": Classic Greek play of a woman avenging her husband's betrayal. 8 pm. Gallery Players [199 14th St. between Fourth and Fifth avenues in Park Slope, (212) 352-3101], galleryplayers.com.

Dancing in the street: "Flex Is Kings," a documentary about street performers in Brooklyn, screens at the BAM Rose Cinemas on March 27 as part of the "New Voices in Black Cinema" series.

band's betrayal. 8 pm. Gallery Players [199 14th St. between Fourth and Fifth avenues in Park Slope, (212) 352-3101], galleryplayers.com.

MUSIC, WOMAN'S HOUR, FUTURE OF WHAT: \$10. 8 pm. Glasslands (289 Kent Ave. at S. Second Street in Williamsburg), www.glasslands.com.

MUSIC, CHICKFACTOR 22 FEATURING THE CLIENTELE, VERSUS, BARBARA MANNING, THE SATURDAY PEOPLE: \$20–\$25. 8 pm. Bell House [149 Seventh St. at Third Avenue in Gowanus, (718) 643-6510], www.thebellhouseny.com.

THEATER, "I'M MISERABLE BUT CHANGE SCARES ME": An existential sitcom about co-dependency and stagnation. \$20. 8 pm. Brick Theater [579 Metropolitan Ave. at Lorimer Street in Williamsburg].

MUSIC, "BOWLIVE V FEATURING SOULIVE": \$15–\$20. 8:30 pm. Brooklyn Bowl [61 Wythe Ave. between N. 11th and N. 12th streets in Williamsburg, (718) 963-3369], www.brooklynbowl.com.

MUSIC, ANYA MARINA & FRIENDS, THE BRITXTONS: \$10. 8:30 pm. Union Hall [702 Union St. at Fifth Avenue in Park Slope, (718) 638-4400], www.unionhallny.com.

MUSIC, LOUISIANA SUN KINGS, ROTARIES, MADELINE MONDRALA, MAX COBURN: \$8. 9 pm. Trash Bar [256 Grand St. at Driggs Avenue in Williamsburg, (718) 599-1000], www.thetrashbar.com.

MUSIC, "REGGAE NIGHT WITH SOUL IMPERIAL": Free. 10 pm. The Diamond [43 Franklin St. near Caylor Street in Greenpoint, (718) 383-5030], thediamondbrooklyn.com.

MUSIC, "KARAOKE KILLED THE CAT": Free. Midnight. Union Hall [702 Union St. at Fifth Avenue in Park Slope, (718) 638-4400], www.unionhallny.com.

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phy course and modern obituaries. 8 pm. Bushwick Starr [207 Starr St. between Irving and Wyckoff streets in Bushwick, (917) 623-9669], www.thebushwickstarr.org.

MUSIC, TINARIWEN: \$20. 8 pm. Brooklyn Bowl [61 Wythe Ave. between N. 11th and N. 12th streets in Williamsburg, (718) 963-3369], www.brooklynbowl.com.

DANCE, "ON HER SHOULDERS: Celebrating the Legacy of Women Artists of the African Diaspora": Performance blending contemporary and traditional choreography. \$15. 8 pm. Cumbe [558 Fulton St., 2nd Floor, between Hudson Avenue and Rockwell Place in Fort Greene, (718) 935-9700].

MUSIC, SILENT KNIGHT & THE BAND CALLED FUSE: \$10. 8 pm. Littlefield [622 Degraw St. between Fourth and Fifth avenues in Gowanus, (718) 855-3388], www.littlefieldnyc.com.

MUSIC, KID CUDI: \$49.50–\$75.00. 8 pm. Barclays Center [620 Atlantic Ave. at Pacific Street in Prospect Heights, (917) 618-6100], www.barclayscenter.com.

MUSIC, BEAT BRIGADE, THE PURS-LAINES, BIKINI CARWASH, LOS DUDES: \$8. 8:45 pm. Trash Bar [256 Grand St. at Driggs Avenue in Williamsburg, (718) 599-1000], www.thetrashbar.com.

SUN, MARCH 23

DANCE, "THE SLEEPING BEAUTY": Russian National Ballet Theatre performs Tchaikovsky's classic fairy tale. \$36–\$45. 3 pm. Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College [2900 Campus Rd., between Amersfort Place and Kenilworth Place in Midwood, (718) 951-4500], www.brooklyncenter-online.org.

MUSIC, "DUO ANOVA": Inaugural performance in the new PLGArts Chamber Music Series. \$5 (suggested). 3 pm. RSVP required for address [Midwood St. at Bedford Ave. in Prospect Lefferts Gardens, (313) 407-3179], plgarts.org.

MUSIC, TINARIWEN: \$20. 6 pm. Brooklyn Bowl [61 Wythe Ave. between N. 11th and N. 12th streets in Williamsburg, (718) 963-3369], www.brooklynbowl.com.

"OUR PRINCESS IS IN ANOTHER CASTLE": "NBA Jam" video game competition. Free. 7:30 pm. Union Hall [702 Union St. at Fifth Avenue in Park Slope, (718) 638-4400], www.unionhallny.com.

FILM, FILM FESTIVAL: "Israel Talking @ the Movies": Four films examine how Jewish ideas of identity and

See 9 DAYS on page 10

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SRDS

Ft. Greene author has soul

Nelson George writes a book on TV show ‘Soul Train’

By Robert Ham
for The Brooklyn Paper

Nelson George knows a thing or two about soul. For the past four decades, he has been one of the preeminent critics of African-American pop culture, focusing his attention over the years on iconic figures such as Michael Jackson and James Brown, to the worlds of basketball and hip-hop. His latest book “The Hippest Trip in America: Soul Train and the Evolution of Culture and Style” takes a journey through the history of the titular TV program, which for 35 years introduced America to the most-of-the-moment musical acts around. On March 26, George will discuss the book at Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration with former “Soul Train” dancer Tyrone Proctor. The Brooklyn Paper spoke with the writer



By George: Fort Greene resident Nelson George has written a book on the TV show “Soul Train,” which he will present at Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration on March 26.

and filmmaker from his home in Fort Greene to discuss the impact of “Soul Train” on American culture.

Robert Ham: Do you remember the first time you saw “Soul Train?”
Nelson George: I don’t

remember the first time, but I do remember watching it as a child. I grew up in Brooklyn on Saturday mornings we’d

watch the show on this little color TV. What I remember about it was how bright and colorful it was. The colors of the set and the vibrant outfits, much brighter than you’d see in New York or Philadelphia.

RH: Do you feel like “Soul Train” gets its due as being such a huge force in popular culture?

NG: Anyone who thinks of the ’70s and dancing and clothes and style, thinks of “Soul Train.” It pops up everywhere from “Austin Powers,” where Beyonce has a “Soul Train” scene — her sister Solange does a video like that. Even a car commercial I saw this winter. Clothing designers still reference the show. So, it definitely lives on. That key period from 1971 to 1985, those years still resonate.

RH: What did you learn interviewing dancers from the show?

NG: I think just the conditions that they danced under. They were pretty rough. On the one hand, they had an incredible opportunity and some incredible exposure, but on the other hand, they weren’t paid. Many of them had full-time jobs and would come dance on the show on the weekends for some fried chicken and some soda. There were a couple of dancers that were really irritated about the fact that they weren’t paid, they were in a union, and didn’t



have any health care attached to their work.

I was also surprised how many of the dancers are still active today, traveling the globe and doing workshops related to some of the dances they popularized on the show.

RH: Do you think a show like “Soul Train” could survive

in today’s media world?
NG: I don’t know. I know that’s something that folks like Nick Cannon and Questlove are trying to figure out, to see if the desire is there for dance on broadcast TV. Dance is not going away, but the internet has become the equivalent of “Soul Train.” Just the other day, my niece who is in her mid-20s and another teenager took me to YouTube to show me this dance and that dance. That’s what “Soul Train” was — it was street dance being spread around the world.

Nelson George presents “The Hippest Trip in America” at Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration [1368 Fulton St. between New York and Brooklyn avenues in Bedford-Stuyvesant, (718) 636-6900, www.restorationplaza.org]. March 26 at 7 pm. Free.

More recommended reading

Borough booksellers offer their top picks of new lit

WORD’s pick

“Annihilation” by Jeff VanderMeer: Jeff VanderMeer’s “Southern Reach” trilogy (parts two and three are due out later in 2014) is off to a brilliant start. “Annihilation” manages to capture the alien sense of awe that permeates Arthur C. Clarke’s classic “Rendezvous with Rama” while entangling readers in a Lovecraftian tale of ever-increasing dread. Four scientists venture into “Area X” to attempt to make sense of this anomalous zone of nature. What follows is simply one of the most tautly written, deeply frightening, and ultimately satisfying science fiction novels in recent memory.

— Ryan O’Connor, WORD [126 Franklin St. at Milton Street in Greenpoint, (718) 383-0096, www.wordbrooklyn.com].

BookMark’s pick

“After I’m Gone” by Laura Lippman: “After I’m Gone” is loosely based on a true crime event in which a Baltimore gangster goes missing, leaving more than one woman behind. This story is told



through the eyes of the women in the life of Felix Brewer, who simply vanishes one night instead of facing possible jail time. On the 10th anniversary of Brewer’s disappearance, his mistress vanishes. When her body turns up, a cold-case detective begins to investigate that long-ago night when Brewer was thought



to have run. Can there be redemption for a man who has cheated, lied, and stole his entire life? A look at two women who loved the same man who only thought of himself when he ran away from a life prison sentence. A fast action paced thriller with a great ending.

— Bina Valenzano, co-owner,

The BookMark Shoppe [8415 Third Ave. between 84th and 85th streets in Bay Ridge, (718) 833-5115, www.bookmarkshoppe.com].

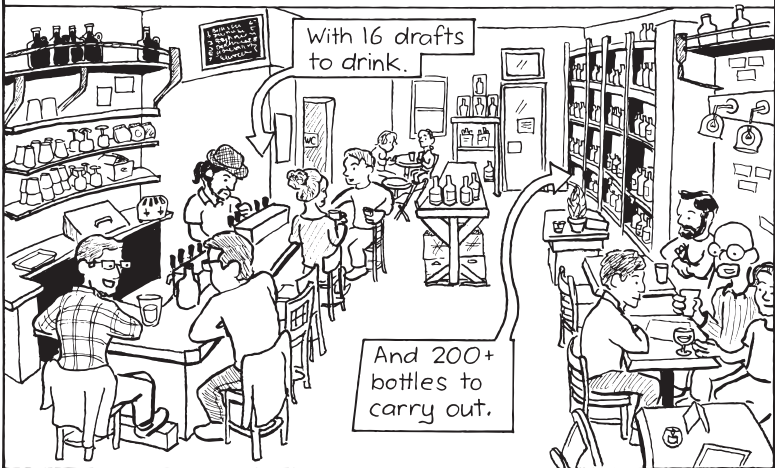
Greenlight’s pick

“My Life in Middelmarch” by Rebecca Mead: George Eliot’s sweeping “Middelmarch” is considered by many to be a near-perfect novel. Rebecca Mead, a New Yorker staff writer, first fell in the love with the classic as a teenage bookworm in rural England, and as she grew older, her appreciation and understanding of the book only grew with her. Mead mixes memoir with biography and critical analysis and the result is this — a tremendous love affair with a true masterpiece. If you’ve already read “Middelmarch,” you’ll immediately feel connected to Mead’s work, and if you haven’t yet taken the plunge, Mead’s passion will convince you that it is well worth the look.

— Emily Russo, Greenlight Bookstore [686 Fulton St. between S. Elliott Place and S. Portland Avenue in Fort Greene, (718) 246-0200, www.greenlightbookstore.com].

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9 DAYS...

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responsibility are portrayed in modern Israeli film. \$10. 11 am. Brooklyn Heights Synagogue [131 Remsen St. near Court Street in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 522-2070], www.bhsbrooklyn.org.

TALK, SQUIRREL TAXIDERMY CLASS: Stuff a squirrel with rogue taxidermist Katie Innamorato. \$300. Noon-6 pm. Morbid Anatomy Museum (424 A Third Ave. at 7th Street in Gowanus), observatory-room.org.

SPORTS, SPRING BIKE TUNEUP: The Diamond provides tools, grease, advice, and cheap beer for annual bike tune-up in the yard. **Free.** 2-4 pm. The Diamond [43 Franklin St. near Caylor Street in Greenpoint, (718) 383-5030], the-diamondbrooklyn.com.

COMEDY, PRETTY GOOD FRIENDS: Hosted by Eugene Mirman, with Maewie Higgins, Jon Benjamin: \$18-\$20. 8 pm. Bell House [149 Seventh St. at Third Avenue in Gowanus, (718) 643-6510], www.thebellhouseny.com.

MON, MARCH 24

FILM, "THE ROARING TWENTIES": Part of the film series "Under the Influence: Scorsese/Walsh." \$13 (\$8 members). 4:30 pm, 7 pm and 9:30 pm. Brooklyn Academy of Music [30 Lafayette Ave. between Ashland Place and St. Felix Street in Fort Greene, (718) 636-4100], www.bam.org.

READING, COLMAN ANDREWS: Author of "My Usual Table," in conversation with Ruth Reichl. **Free.** 7 pm. PowerHouse Arena [37 Main St. at Water Street in Dumbo, (718) 666-3049], powerhousearena.com.

MUSIC, PUSSY WOLF, DR. MARTINO, ERIC ZU, SENATORS: \$7. 8 pm. Trash Bar [256 Grand St. at Driggs Avenue in Williamsburg, (718) 599-1000], www.thetrashbar.com.

TUES, MARCH 25

GIRL SCOUT COOKIE POP-UP SHOP: Credit cards accepted. \$4. 3:30-7:30 pm. St. George's Episcopal Church (800 Marcy Ave. at Gates Avenue in Bedford-Stuyvesant), www.girlscoutsnyc.org.

TALK, SPRING LECTURE SERIES: "Can Men Be Civilized without Monogamy?" **Free.** 6-8 pm. St. Francis College [180 Remsen St. between Court and Clinton streets in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 489-5200], www.sfc.edu.

FILM, CREATED EQUAL SCREENING AND DISCUSSION: "The Loving Story": Documentary about the Lovings, whose landmark 1967 Supreme Court case legalized interracial marriage. **Free.** 6:30 pm. Brooklyn Historical Society [128 Pierrepont St. at Clinton Street in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 222-4111]

Kid n play: Kid Cudi plays the Barclays Center on March 22.

www.brooklynhistory.org.
READING, PAUL ROSOLIE: Author of "Mother of God," in conversation with Michael Signorelli. **Free.** 7 pm. PowerHouse Arena [37 Main St. at Water Street in Dumbo, (718) 666-3049], powerhousearena.com.

COMEDY, DUMBO COMEDY: Standup hosted by Aaron Kominos-Smith and Meghan Hanley. **Free.** 8 pm. Dish Dumbo [81 Washington St. between York and Front streets in Dumbo, (718) 625-3474], www.facebook.com/dumbocomedy.

MUSIC, NOPOP, COPAN, VALVED VOICE, KEITH VARICK: \$7. 8 pm. Trash Bar [256 Grand St. at Driggs Avenue in Williamsburg, (718) 599-1000], www.thetrashbar.com.

WED, MARCH 26

READING, SARA BARRON: Author of "The Harm in Asking." **Free.** 7 pm. PowerHouse Arena [37 Main St. at Water Street in Dumbo, (718) 666-3049], www.powerhousearena.com.

READING, DANICA NOVGORODOFF: Author of "The Undertaking of Lily Chen." In conversation with Whitney Matheson. **Free.** 7:30 pm. Greenlight Bookstore [686 Fulton St. between S. Elliott Place and S. Portland Avenue in Fort Greene, (718) 246-0200], greenlightbookstore.com.

MUSIC, FLORIDINGBLAST, RANGUTANG, THROW VISION, THE REGULARS, ERVIN STELLAR: \$7. 8 pm. Trash Bar [256 Grand St. at Driggs Avenue in Williamsburg, (718) 599-1000], www.thetrashbar.com.

ART, "SELF TIME": Art show and live performance. **Free.** 8 pm. Brooklyn Fire Proof [119 Ingraham St. at Porter Avenue in Bushwick], www.brooklynfireproof.com.

TALK, "SCIENCE NIGHT!": "Restoring Visual Function to Blind Mice." \$7. 8 pm. Silent Barn [603 Bushwick Ave. between Jefferson and Melrose streets in Bushwick], silentharn.org.

THURS, MARCH 27

FILM, FILM FESTIVAL: "New Voices in Black Cinema": Narrative and documentary films showcasing the depth and diversity of the African-American experience. Brooklyn Academy of Music [30 Lafayette Ave. between Ashland Place and St. Felix Street in Fort Greene, (718) 636-4100], www.bam.org.

TALK, "THE FUTURE IS HISTORY": Panelists discuss feminism's impact on art in New York City. Free with museum admission. 7 pm. Brooklyn Museum [200 Eastern Pkwy. at Washington Avenue in Prospect Heights, (718) 638-5000], brooklynmuseum.org.

READING, "HOW TO BUILD A FIRE": Prominent community members share true tales in this monthly series curated by poet Terence Degnan. **Free.** 7:30-10 pm. Open Source Gallery [306 17th St. between Fifth and Sixth avenues in South Slope, (646) 279-3969], open-source-gallery.org.

MUSIC, KID CUDI: With King Clip. \$49.50-\$75. 8 pm. Barclays Center [620 Atlantic Ave. at Pacific Street in Prospect Heights, (917) 618-6100], www.barclayscenter.com.

MUSIC, THE VON SHAKES, SLIM WRAY, SHARKMUFFIN, THE WIVES: \$8. 8 pm. Union Pool [484 Union Ave. at Meeker Avenue in Williamsburg, (718) 609-0484], www.myspace.com/union-pool.

COMEDY, "#BITCHFACE MINI WORLD TOUR": Comedy from Joe Mande. \$14-\$16. 8 pm. Bell House [149 Seventh St. at Third Avenue in Gowanus, (718) 643-6510], www.thebellhouseny.com.

MUSIC, MAUDE, POCKET POOL, COLOUR BUK, OWEN MCCARTHY: \$7. 8 pm. Trash Bar [256 Grand St. at Driggs Avenue in Williamsburg, (718) 599-1000], www.thetrashbar.com.

FRI, MARCH 28

THEATER, "THE EXONERATED": \$20 (suggested). 6:30 pm. St. Francis College [180 Remsen St. between Court and Clinton

streets in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 489-5200], www.sfc.edu.

COMEDY, "LOL HEALS": An evening of comedy and art to support organ donation awareness. \$20. 7:30 PM. Standard ToyKraft [722 Metropolitan Ave. near Graham Avenue in Williamsburg], speakyourtruthinfo.wordpress.com.

THEATER, "THE TRESTLE AT POPE LICK CREEK": Two teenagers seek adventure and escape by racing trains in the 1930s. \$12 (\$10 students). 7:30 pm. The New Workshop Theater at Brooklyn College [2900 Bedford Ave. at Campus Road in Flatbush, (718) 951-4500].

THEATER, "YENTL": A play by Leah Napolin and Isaac Bashevis Singer, directed by Susan Montez. \$25 (\$23 seniors, children under 18). 8 pm. Heights Players [2

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Sabotage!

Tenants: Bad landlord is wrecking our apartments

By Danielle Furfaro
The Brooklyn Paper

A Bushwick landlord punched massive holes in his rent-stabilized tenants’ floor to drive them out and jack up the rent, claim residents and politicians who are calling on the city to beef up laws to stop what they say is an epidemic of building owner sabotage.

The building at 98 Linden St. is owned by Joel Israel, who renters say pledged to paint and put in new floor tiles in June but instead ripped two 10-foot-wide craters in the floor in different rooms on the ground level and left it that way in a bid to make the apartment legally unlivable and, ultimately, rent the building at market rates. A local official says that such tactics are not punished harshly enough by the government.

“He has decided to take advantage of the weak policies of the city,” Councilman Antonio Reynoso (D–Bushwick) during a press conference at the building on Tuesday.

The current fines for violating housing codes are low enough that landlords can do whatever they want and accept the penalties as a cost of doing business, activists say.

Noelia Calero, who lives on the ground floor at 98 Linden, has a hole in her living room that she can see the basement through, which she says has forced her, her husband, and her parents to use the kitchen and bathroom of an upstairs neighbor for the past 10 months. To add insult to extreme inconvenience, Israel hired a building resident to walk around the building playing loud music, accompanied by a mean dog, Calero said. “He wants to evict everyone from the building,” she said. “I will not move out. I have lived here 23 years. This is my home.”

Israel owns 19 buildings throughout New York, 10 of which are in Brooklyn, including 300 Nassau Ave. in Greenpoint, where tenants were forced out after they say he took an ax to the boilers, thermostat, and circuit breakers. All of Israel’s buildings have been cited for code violations and many have apartments that are officially uninhabitable, but the costs he has incurred are small. Israel is currently facing less than \$2,500 in fines for the dire state of the Linden Street apartment building.

Reynoso, Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez (D–Bushwick), and a coalition of com-



(Left) Tenant Noelia Calero claims that landlord Joel Israel demolished the floor in her kitchen and living room in June in an effort to force her out. (Right) Councilman Antonio Reynoso speaks in front of 98 Linden St.



Photos by Stefano Giovannini

munity groups are imploring the city to hit landlord saboteurs with more citations and to create laws that would allow the city to seize property

from them if they fail to clean up their acts.

“It is unconscionable in the city of New York, which is the financial capital of the world,

that we would allow what this landlord is doing to these tenants,” said Velazquez.

Israel did not respond to a request for comment.

Push for traffic lights on Kent

By Danielle Furfaro
The Brooklyn Paper

Fast-moving Kent Avenue is a tragedy waiting to happen, say neighbors who are pushing the city to install stoplights along the thoroughfare near East River State Park.

Residents believe that the combination of tourist pedestrians, bicycle commuters, and children at play alongside heavy vehicles with no signals slowing them down make the avenue a death trap.

“There are cars and bicyclists and strollers and ice

cream trucks,” said Friends of East River State Park member Jackie Meyer. “I’ve seen a lot of near misses. It’s just a matter of time before there’s a tragedy.”

Last summer, nearly 8,000 people came into the park each weekend for the popular hipster markets Smorgasburg and Brooklyn Flea, Meyer said. Thousands of bicyclists ride along the bike path connecting Williamsburg to Fort Greene each day, she said.

The city says it hears the concerns, but that federal standards disqualify the road from

getting new traffic signals.

“It is federally mandated and if we don’t have enough of the mandates, we cannot do it,” said Joseph Palmieri, Brooklyn roads commissioner.

If the city cannot install traffic lights, there may be other tools, such as rumble strips, that the city can use, said Palmieri. But because the avenue is a bus route, the city says it cannot install speed humps either. The excuses do not satisfy neighbors, who accuse city road planners of being “bean counters” who are twiddling their thumbs, waiting for the street to rack up a certain number of crashes, injuries, or deaths before taking action.

Palmieri said he will ask the transportation department to conduct more studies on the avenue.



A view from the balcony above the Bossert Hotel’s lobby reveals sparkling crown molding, ornate ceilings, and a big “B” for “Bossert.”

BOSSERT...

Continued from page 1

Hicks streets and famously hosted the victory party for the World-Series-winning Brooklyn Dodgers in 1955, has sat fallow for decades, but is on its way to becoming a world-class tourist destination once more.

Lumber magnate Louis Bossert built the 14-story hotel in 1909. Jehovah’s Witnesses bought it in the 1980s and used it for visiting members of the church. It also housed a number of permanent residents.

Real estate developers David Bistricher and Joseph Chetrit bought the property in 2012 with promises to return the Italian renaissance revival building to its former glory and, if the gleaming details in the lobby are any indication, they meant it.

Tarps and partitions still line the grand main floor and most of the other levels are in the midst of gut renovations, with the exception of the 13th floor, where long-time tenants are still bunking down.

SIGNS...

Continued from page 1

should be enough to motivate the city to make those areas Slow Zones.

Cohen Eckstein’s mom said that lowering the limit is a matter of life and death.

“If the speed limit had been 20 miles an hour, Sammy would probably still be alive,” Amy Cohen said after protesters installed a sign on a Park Slope street.

The group posted the simulation go-slow signs along Prospect Park West in November and the city caved and lowered the speed limit to 25 miles per hour for the length of that road in January.

DeKalb Avenue, which runs from Queens to Fulton Street downtown, is an extremely dangerous corridor for pedestrians, as is the intersection of Kent Street and McGuinness Boulevard in Greenpoint, according to

Stephan. Ramped-up traffic enforcement is also vital to making the borough’s mean streets safer, he said.

“We’re pushing for Slow Zones, and then after they’re installed, we absolutely have to have enforcement,” he said.

A spokesman for the Department of Transportation pointed to Mayor DeBlasio’s Vision Zero report, which calls for eight new Slow Zones per year, as evidence that safety is the agency’s number-one concern.

“We continue to work with all our Vision Zero partner agencies as well as stakeholders in communities across the city to target speeding and dangerous driving,” said spokesman Nicholas Mosquera, adding that it has been a longstanding city practice to remove unauthorized placards.


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COURT...

Continued from page 1

forgot why it was set up in the first place,” said Delcina Biggs, a Pratt Area Community Council tenant leader who spent four years fighting off a bogus eviction. “Now it’s all about landlord’s getting their money.”

Housing court handles complaints from landlords trying to toss their tenants and from renters who have trouble getting owners to fix up their buildings. Advocates contend that the system is slanted in favor of owners, which they say you can see clear as day if you consider the fact that 14 of 15 courtrooms in Brooklyn’s housing court are dedicated to eviction proceedings, while just one handles



Beverly Rivers and Jean Wilinon take part in the protest organized by Brooklyn Tenants United.

tenant complaints.

“Equality does not live in housing court right now,” said Assemblyman Walter Mosely (D-Fort Greene), in his testimony at the elaborate fake hearing in Borough Hall’s ceremonial courtroom, where, incidentally, court scenes on the TV show “Law and Order” were filmed.

Tenant leaders posed as witnesses and talked about the issues tenants encounter in the courts after remarks from Borough President Adams, Public Advocate Letitia James, and other officials.

Biggs’s story has as many twists and turns as advocates say the court system does. She lived in the same rent-stabilized apartment on E. 17th Street in

Flatbush for 30 years and her landlord never pursued a major rent increase. But when her building was bought in 2009, the new owner tried to get her to sign bogus leases dating back five years in order to justify a massive rent hike.

When she refused, he tried to evict her. The case dragged

on for years.

“It had become so twisted because everything was based on fraudulent papers,” said Michael Grinthal, a lawyer for Mobilization For Youth Legal Services, which provides legal representation to people who cannot afford attorneys.

The eviction bid was even-

tually thrown out, but without a connection to an advocacy group like the Pratt Area Community Council, who got Grinthal involved, Biggs might still be fighting it, said Jonathon Furlong an organizer with the council.

The problem of landlord supremacy extends to the courthouse at 141 Livingston St., said the pols, pointing out that the city rents the building from David Bistricher, a big-time landowner who made now-Mayor DeBlasio’s list of worst landlords in the city back in 2010, when DeBlasio was public advocate. The space is run-down, too small to handle today’s caseloads, and is difficult for disabled people to access, tenants said. They demanded more translators, better legal services, and easier access to information about how court proceedings work.

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Schoolhouses ready to rock

New arts organization bringing music direct to kids

By Matthew Perlman
The Brooklyn Paper

Welcome to rock and roll elementary school.

Students and teachers at PS 81 in Bedford-Stuyvesant got up and danced on March 12 during a performance by local musician Suzi Shelton — Ms. Suzi to most of her petite fans.

The show was part of an event organized by the arts group InspireCorps whose name, judging by the student response, the youngsters took to heart.

“It was great for the kids to jump around,” said Deborah Watts, a kindergarten teacher at the school who got into the swing of things. “And me too.”

The group put on the concert for kindergartners and first- and second-graders at the school on DeKalb Avenue between Lewis and Stuyvesant avenues. It also brought in up-and-coming hip hop artist Donnovan Blocker, who goes by the stage name Dyme-A-Duzin, to the school to speak with older students about his budding career and the importance of writing.

InspireCorps is an organization founded last year by Park Slope mom and Brook-



lyn Paper parenting columnist Stephanie Thompson with the mission of bringing artists, writers, and musicians to low-income schools to get students interested in the arts.

Singer-songwriter Ms. Suzi performed with guitarist Greg Mayo, at PS 81 in Bedford-Stuyvesant on March 12.

lyn Paper parenting columnist Stephanie Thompson with the mission of bringing artists, writers, and musicians to low-income schools to get students interested in the arts.

Thompson got the idea for the organization when she noticed while volunteering with a literacy program

that schools in poor areas do not get the type of arts programming her sons' school in Park Slope gets. She wanted to change that.

“Offering kids access and engagement to arts is crucial,” she said.

InspireCorps pays local artists to tell students about

their crafts and to get kids interested in creative pursuits.

“The artists need to make money,” Thompson said. “And it’s a great win-win to have the artists at the schools.”

Ms. Suzi, who also lives in Park Slope, spoke to the children about her love of music.

“Songwriting is something that everyone can do,” she told her tiny audience. “A song is just a poem put into a melody.”

The teachers were impressed with the production.

“The kids really liked how interactive it was,” said Watts.

Blocker, who is 21 and about to release an album on Atlantic Records, talked to the older kids about how he got started writing songs in an East Flatbush public school much like theirs. He said a teacher told him to keep a journal and it became a good way for him express the things he saw in everyday life.

“It’s really important that kids are able to express their life experiences in a productive way,” Thompson said.

The musician’s fee for this Ms. Suzi performance was

Battle of the Takedown flyers

Matt Timms has hosted offbeat contests at bars around Brooklyn for more than a decade (see cover story). The Takedown events started as chili cook-offs advertised with black-and-white flyers and have evolved to incorporate bacon, Bob Ross paintings, and out-of-this world color posters. Look back at some of the most radical Takedowns Brooklyn has ever seen and the flyers that promoted them, as told by Timms.



Grits Takedown, 2010

JUDGES’ WINNER: Gravlax and grits (kind of like lox)

PEOPLE’S WINNER: Brazilian grits

FLYER INPIRATION: “The warrior princess became an octopus. She eventually went on to satanic rituals.”

FAVORITE MEMORY: “All the Southern transplants came out and people just went to town. They get all serious on you when you start talking grits.”

FUN FACT: Grits were chosen because this Takedown was part of the Food Film Festival, which featured a documentary about grits.



Meatball Takedown, 2013

JUDGES’ WINNER: Great Wall of Meatball

PEOPLE’S WINNER: Frankie Meatballs

POSTER INSPIRATION: “There’s spaghetti and meatballs. Why not snakes and meatballs?”

FAVORITE MEMORY: “There was this deep-fried meatball with a ravioli in the middle of it. It was insane!”

FUN FACT: Timms didn’t want to do meatballs, but a friend pressured him into it. Now the dish is his favorite.



Bob Ross Takedown, 2013

PEOPLE’S WINNER: Alice Q. Hoang

POSTER INSPIRATION: “It’s zombie Bob Ross. First of all, he’s dead. But also, you have to spin Bob Ross on his head. That’s the whole idea.”

FAVORITE MEMORY: “People are such artists. Some one painted a Bob Ross painting with a volcano. One was with Bushwick tenements.”

FUN FACT: Bob Ross was the first art Takedown. All the proceeds went to Citymeals-on-Wheels.

CHILI...

Continued from page 1 ough and, before long, they had grown too big for venues such as Matchless and Union Pool, forcing them into their current home in Gowanus’ Bell House.

Timms charges admission to the Takedowns, but it is free to compete. All gastronomical gladiators have to come up with are their own supplies. Prizes are often furnished by corporate sponsors — usually they consist of a food processor, a set of knives, or some cookware. The master master of ceremonies would not divulge how much he makes per event, but said that it covers his rent. His only concern now is that the Takedown brand could one day get too big.

“I just want to make sure they stay like a Takedown, like I used to have in my living room,” he said, explaining that amateurism is key to the events, as opposed to the polished approach of professional cooks.

“This thing about emerging home cooks is really important,” he said. “Chefs suck.”

Timms takes exception to formally trained chefs because they practice making the same dish over and over

again, whereas home cooks get to improvise and do what they feel like.

“[Cooking is] not an art, no matter what a chef says,” he said. “Anyone who says it is is full of s---.”

The frank impresario donates a small portion of what he makes at the cooking contests to the Women’s Education Project, an organization that helps young women pursue higher education in India, and the art battles are entirely for charity, he said. He auctions off the art pieces afterwards and donates the proceeds to a different cause each time, he said.

Timms has an arts background thanks to his father, a museum director, and his mother, a painter, but he is quick to point out he is no Van Gogh.

“I’m a s----- artist, myself,” he said.

Timms’s first non-food match was a Bob Ross Takedown, where he projected an episode of the smooth-talking painter’s how-to show and contestants tried to paint along.

“I thought it would be more of a competition,” he said. “But artists are such hippies.”

These days, Timms often

takes his show on the road, sharing the joy of competitive home cooking with cities all over the country. He books about 15 events a year and the job has brought him to San Francisco, Portland, and Boston, to name a few,

he said. A Mac and Cheese Takedown is coming up on March 23 at the Bell House. Thirty competitors are signed up and the 250 spectator tickets have already sold out for \$15 a pop.

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The Dad

By Scott Sager

Then they should go for that. Whatever it is will be a lot more fun, fulfilling, and challenging than worrying about finding a husband.

The school hosts other wacky math events, including Fun Facts Friday, when teachers dressed as ninjas storm classrooms and students have to correctly multiply to help free their tiger mascot, whom the ninjas have supposedly kidnapped.

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